usually fall quickly. At present the value of EBV serological studies in routine diagnosis has not been clarified.

BARBARA H. TINDLE, M.D.

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Computer-Based Inventory and Information Systems for Blood Banks

The availability of blood and blood products in sufficient quantities is an essential component in the delivery of health care. The regional blood bank is concerned with input of blood (donor recruitment), distribution of blood (inventory control and component preparation) and use or disposition of blood. These functions can be greatly facilitated by the application of a computer-based information system. Systems utilizing either dedicated or time-sharing computers are now available which offer: donor files with automatic call-up to actively control blood input, minimizing shortages without incurring excessive outdating; inventory programs to track the blood in the system using critical parameters such as location, ABO and Rh type, and days remaining before expiration; and a donor-patient link to simplify control of problems such as transfusion hepatitis. Statistical summaries and management reports produced by the computer provide a means to develop strategies which maximize the use of the community blood resources. It is too early to assess the cost-effectiveness of these systems, but experience indicates that the added cost will result in significant improvement in blood bank services.

S. P. MASOUREDIS, M.D.

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Slow Virus Infection of Nervous Tissue

One of the most exciting advances in neuropathology was the demonstration by Gajdusek et al (1967) and Gibbs and Gajdusek (1969) that two subacute progressive "degenerative" diseases of the human nervous system, namely Kuru and Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, could be transmitted to chimpanzees. After an incubation time of from one to two years in the animals a slowly progressive encephalopathy developed that mimicked the corresponding human disease. The pathologic changes of these diseases are remarkable in that there are no inflammatory reactions. Intense gliosis and vacuolar degeneration of nerve cells are characteristic findings. A similar subacute spongiform encephalopathy, namely scrapie, is known to occur in sheep. The agents inducing these encephalopathic conditions have not yet been identified. The unusual characteristics of the scrapie agent suggest a structure akin to plasma membranes. Electron microscopy supports this theory by revealing abnormal collections of membranes in vacuolated neuronal processes. There is reason to believe that other degenerative diseases of the nervous system may also be caused by slow virus infections.

PETER LAMPERT, M.D.

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Prevention of Viral Hepatitis

In 1970, the national cooperative study of post-transfusion hepatitis reported that 30 ml of gamma globulin following transfusion failed to prevent or modify either short (IH) or long incubation (SH) disease. However, globulin does pre-